bBr 439.10.1

West Philadelphia 6/18th/77

Dear Sir

My Friend Geo. N. Lawrence of N. York. once wrote me that he regarded the true lover of Nature, as possessing in his own right, a certain Native passport which entitled him to fraternity with kindred Spirits, wherever located; Therefore from motives which will be explained presently, presume to address you, in the absence of a mutual friend, to introduce me to the pleasure of your personal acquaintance: Have just been perusing your Spirited description of the nesting of the Black & yellow warbler warbler (S. magnolia) by recent Literature rendered (maculosa) in my judgement a much less euphonious Synonyme, Had the pleasure of once finding this, also that of the Blue Y. Back in the mountains of Penna. near Tamaqua, both unfortunately contained young though not later the 10th of June, the magnolia Nest was Substantially as you describe it, with the Same dark root fibres, as the centre linings, and as you observe without feathers, and as at once occurred to me Resembling the chipping Sparrow, was located in the lower branches of a Hemlock, about 10 ft from the ground, that of the Blue Y. Back was pensile, composed wholly of long trailing moss, which grew naturally upon the tree; but which was so interwoven, as to form a beautiful & comfortable domicile, having a long extended opening upon the side, These with the exception of the Blue winged yellow & the Black & white creeping, are all the nests of the Sylvia, that I ever met with, abating those of the common Aestiva & maryland, of course you are aware that the Blue W. yellow & B. & W. creeping, both nest on, or near the ground. Shot the present Season for the first time so far North, the Kentucky W. & have reason to regard this, as the extent of its Northern range, on the last day March last year, obtained the orange crowned, which at this early period was in full song. & on the banks of the Schuylkill 2 years ago, shot the Prothonotary, both rare stragglers from the south & west; But not to fatigue you, come to the special topic of Interest, and in which ~~of all~~ ~~others~~ I think you, of all others will share. On the 12th of May the present Season, my friend & neighbour Chas. Wood obtained in an apple Orchard, the Bird which you had the honour to discover & to first figure & describe in the pamphlet of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, but with seemingly too much modesty to call it Brewsteri, (viz) Helminthophaga Leucofrontallis, It is the very Counterpart of yours, having the same delicate tinge of sulphur yellow on the breast, with the rest of the lower part pure silky white, with no vestige of the black throat, of the golden wing, the slight black line through the eye, is much like that of H. Pinus, the golden yellow of the crown & coverts being the same as in Chrysoptera; Mr. W. is a Taxidermist by profession & has made of it as beautiful a skin as you ever saw, in fact in that line, he is an adept, skins but small birds wholly with scissors, and I have seen that remove the skin in one minute by the watch, has visited South & central America, & has just returned from Beaufort Co. South Carolina, bringing 117 beautiful skins of the Nuptial lots of the Hooded, Parulas, Herons &c; He wrote me, from Florida or vicinity, that had a Thrush new to him, but when I saw it. I told him, that I considered it had as much right to be called a Warbler, as the worming Eating, Prothonotary or others with the long straight bill & in fact I believe it turns out to be, Swainsons warbler, as I have never seen a specimen of this, cannot certify to its Identity from my own Knowledge would volunteer a description, but confess myself an Ignoramus regarding the Technical phraseology, which indicates, or portrays, the different portions & coloration of a Bird, though presume the Knowledge is not difficult of acquisition.

Mr Wood, also once killed D. Townsendi, the same being unique, in the Eastern portion of the U.S., so far as my Knowledge extends. Have added to my cabinet recently the following, Hermit Warbler (Occidentalis) D. Townsendi, Black T. Gray. Red faced from Sierra Madre, N. M., with the beautiful painted Flycatcher Setophaga Picta, from Arizona, These I presume are not new to you but were to my collection & I am proud of them. Should infer from your enthusiasm in writing of Warblers, that these are your Specialty, If so they are mine also. In 1875 at Caribou Colorado, found the Nest of Broad T. Hummer, it was placed upon the lower branch of a Silver fir, not more than 2 ft from ground, at the time it contained but one egg, & I awaited 3 days, in atmosphere difficult of respiration (elevation 10.000 ft ~~for~~ ere the set of two, were deposited. this nest was constructed of a white cottony substance, without Lichens externally, though near the base, a little green moss occurs, the little seraphim exhibited such Philoprogenitiveness, as to allow the hand to approach within an inch or two of its back before it reluctantly slid from the Nest; a strong, and almost irresistible appeal to the Emotions of Humanity, which are alas too frequently ignored, or disregarded by the Collector. forced here

Mc Ilvain J. H.
Jan 1877

also the red backed Snow Bird, Junko Something, have lost my list Clerks Crow &c. there were lots of the little ruby crowned Kinglets, ~~[illegible]~~ chyming their sweet, peculiar notes. with vivacity, so familiar, as strongly to remind one of Home associations, for the nest of this, as also, for that of the Red crossbill, I searched in vain among the few pines, with the Snow still lying late on Land, about, & near their bases. By the bye. Mr Lawrence says this western crossbill is regarded a variety of Curvirostra Americana, but for myself cannot perceive the difference, & can show them that the same disparity of size, occurs in the Eastern bird, the note is precisely the same, though this is not a certain criterion of course, as the black Headed Grosbeak has the same sweetly modulated notes. as the Rosebreast & apparently identical in cadence. Profes Baird has tried to point specified difference between the Eastern White crowned Sparrow & the western (or gambeli), but I fail to see it. What say you? There is however a radical distinction. between Mcgillivrayi & the mourning, as also the Eastern & western Towhee, D. Coronata & D. Auduboni, & others. in which there is a wonderful approximation, & which modern researches impute to climatic influences, occurring, in different geographical ranges,

Should you visit our city. would be
most happy to have a call & shall be
pleased to hear from you at any time

Yours &c

J. H. McIlvain
3303 Baring St
West Philada Pa

Mr. Wm Brewster

-tened. I say Hermit, but really do not know whether it is the Hermit or the Tawny, which has this remarkable dole, as I never liked to kill the Bird while singing. "Pray! have you ever seen the Nest of the Blue Yellow-Back? I once found one at Tamaqua Pa. & this last spring, recd another. The most beautiful little structure imaginable, constructed wholly of green moss, or Lichen, pensile, & pouch shaped; with so small & neat an opening on the side as to admit with difficulty the little creature within; obtained also through my nephew A. R. Justice (who has a splendid Collection of Eggs, arranged with taste) the Nest of the Hooded & Chestnut sided warblers; very few of the warblers build in Penn^a & it has ~~not~~ been my fortune to find but few of them, but of the Nests of Trochilus Colubris, I have found 21 and of the Broad T. one, 10.000 ft above the sea; I presume your collection is chiefly in skins, but many men of many minds, for myself should a skin not admit of being rendered life like, I should set no value upon it though ever so rare. Well I think I am about spun out.

As Wilson was entranced over the plumage of an Owl, so have I over autumnal leaves, & after trying all the known recipes for preserving their gorgeous tints, concluded to transfer them on canvas — so I have amused myself in Painting their likeness. Believe me to be &c your friend

J. H. McIlwain
3305 Baring St West Phila Pa

Should you visit our city again during my lifetime & do me the honor of a visit I promise you a welcome from the heart

Nothing extenuate, or aught set down in malice

West Phila Jan 14th 1878

McIlwain, J. H.
Jan 14 — 1878

Mr. Brewster

Dear Sir

Your kind letter was received on Thursday morning of this week, & ere attempting a reply, concluded to let you get fairly domiciled after your travel.

To say that I experienced no chagrin at the non-response to an Epistle penned some months since, on the presumption that congeniality of pursuit entitled its possessor to a passport, without formal introduction, would be to impeach my veracity, a mortification enhanced from the fact that several mutual friends were cognizant of the despatching of said letter, & I was continually met with the Query "No answer, from Brewster?" Had I essayed correspondence with some Pedantic Idiot, whose smattering of Ornithological lore was so inflated his Egotism, as to induce him to look down contemptuously upon his compeers, I should have esteemed his silence the better part of valor, unco calculated compliment; the most remote from his intention. But (though I would not be fulsome) I know you, though we have never met; between us, there is great disparity of years; but like yourself I have been familiar with wild wood rambles, 4 times to the R. Mountains & once to California, my first Bird was skinned on the Washita Arkansas, while traveling with J. K. Townsend, the discoverer of the Bird which bears his name. In a word the sweet chyming of the Woodland choristers is familiar to my ear & I know their haunts, from the deep morass to the mountain top.

Mr Brewster forgive me speaking so much of myself, You have my full & entire forgiveness, even though an indignity were intended, which none, unless possessing a morbid sensibility would for a moment immagine.

Beside one has a perfect right to choose with whom he will correspond, justified also perchance by the exactions upon his time, which does not admit it. or from want of inclination which does not enjoin it." Now I have done; and will talk about Birds. Would like to be instrumental in obtaining for you, the new W. in the possession of Mr Wood (Leuco-Bronchialis) as I have known him long & have some influence with him. but he having once parted with a straggler for the far west shot here (D. Townsendii, (a circumstance I believe he never regret to the day of his death) he holds on to this with a tenacious grip. Have just recd a magnificent specimen of the Hermit Warbler. (Occidentalis) D. Nigrescens, D. Townsendii Cardellina Rubrifrons (Red faced W) from Sierra Madre S. Mexico with. Setophaga Picta. (Painted L.) the very counterpart in contour of the Redstart, together with a pair Spruce grouse, (which you yankees) surname Partridge, these last from my worthy friend P. W. Aldridge of Readville Mass.

I think you say your extensive collection lacks Helminthophaga virginiae, I think you can get it of Mr Aiken collector at Cola Springs, I myself shot it in the Garden of the Gods, 1872 when I did not know of its existence: though so greatly resembling the Nashville, its notes are entirely dissimilar. Sorry I have forgotten the notes of Mr Gillivray's, as I should like to compare them with those of the Mourning, which in Pa considered a rare bird. I found upon the Pocono M. in the vicinity of the Tobyhanna quite abundant, the little minstrel was heard at short intervals the entire day: The notes resemble the words "Tré'al. Tré'al Tré'al. Tilly Tilly Tilly, rather rapidly repeated. these with the Pe-pe-pepo-pe, of the B. T. green, with the clarion notes of the Hermit Thrush, as they pealed & reverberated on the sweet morning Zephyrs, were dearer to me than any Instrumental Solo. to which I ever list-

14 Jan 78

In addition to ~~the additions to~~ my collection enumerated within I have a splendid specimen of the cock of the plains (centronyx Bairdii violet green swallow which latt I found particularly numerous in Estes Park under Longs Peak, in front of my cabin, of which I was the sole tenant, they would alight on the ground every morning to the number of 8 or 10 here. I also obtained Williamson's Woodpecker S. Audubonii, with a splendid specimen of the Red cross bill C. americanna, regarded by Mr Lawrence, as a variety, but as I shew them the same distincts of size is found here. from the Centennial Com' I heard the European Bird much superior in size as you are aware, the Bull-finch. gold Finch. Wren &c, this as Wilson observes much resembles our Winter Wren. have the Nest of the latter, but have never seen ours. At Caraboo at great Elevation found the Red backed Snow-bird & little ruby crown Kinglet very numerous, the latter had the same continuous vivacity of song noticable in the Bird here, this was in June & I searched in vain for the Nest. Clarks crow, was plentiful here, but as respiration was difficult at this Elevation 10.000 ft. I did not pursue to the snow peaked sides they frequented. do not expect a reply to this long discursive incoherent letter but should always be pleased to hear from you. A friend of mine a Mr Stocks has the only specimen of Backmans W. I ever seen

(over)

In fact I never heard of any person except Dr B. Hearsey shot it. he had also Lucy's. & D. Graciae with occidentallis & others but he has parted with the collection to Mr Cope." Bye the Bye what think you. of Sylvia Parus, Wilson Hemlock, I believe it is generally regarded mythical, or the Immature bird of the Blackburnian, except Audubon who speaks of having obtained 20 with the nest, through the Rifle of the worthy Jediah Irish, I never heard of any other person being so lucky as to meet a single Individual, who knows however but that it may one day turn up. as the Cape May, was long regarded extremely rare, as also your (Bronchiallis, every will depend doubtless on its habitat, where they are not isolated I have several of the Cape May but never killed but one myself which was in my own garden,

---

close me, but will be happy at any time to see you. ~~I recd last summer a splendid specm of Occidentallis or Hermit W. it was shot in San Diego Co Cala I think you said your very extensive Collection did not contain this with several other~~

Your comments

West Philada Feb 8th 78

My dear Friend

Your very kind & welcome letter was duly received, and although it does not require immediate reply, thought I would write you briefly, without much prospect however of your receiving it, as I did not at first recognize the fact of your leaving for the South so soon, Have taken the liberty to enclose a letter of Introduction to my very intimate friends, the Messrs. Ashmeads, of 33 West Bay St Florida, as in case of accident, or sickness, it is pleasant to have such recourse, (although for aught I know, you may have many acquaintance there) Should you be in Jacksonville, if agreeably to you, would like you to call upon them at all events. you will find them young, courteous & Intelligent, from our city, & possessed of fine tastes, the two

and I well know, ~~write~~, that writing is vexatious & onerous, while engaged in collecting, therefore do not expect to be posted as your intimate, though should you procure any thing new, would not object to hear from you upon your return: (Eye the Eye) Mr. Wood & Woolman go also to Florida & Georgia the latter part of this month to remain till March: when Chris, was down last year. he wrote me that he had a Thrush new to them, which when I saw, I found it was no Thrush, but was as much entitled to be called a Sylvia, as the Prothonotary Worm Eaters or others of that class, It turned out to be Swainsons W. but I had never before seen it. & was Ignorant of the fact; Mr B. will you not call upon me in going or returning? I would like mutual well to meet you & if you do not receive a welcome as long as you chose to remain. why you can take French leave, Yours &c

I. H McIlvain

Isaac McIlvain
Feb 8/78

Youngest. Clarence & William are twins, and the resemblance is so striking that it is difficult to tell t'other from which. their business is books & stationary, Walter, the eldest, has sent many specimens of Reptiles &c to our Zoological garden. The beautiful, Black-burnian Warbler, was also rec'd. the day preceeding your letter. & it puzzled me greatly, to conjecture from whence it came; many thanks for the same. the specimen is thus of a beautiful adult. & the preparation unexceptionable. And as I once told my friend Chs L Bendire of Camp Harney Oregon, on the occasion of his remitting me the skins of the Bohemian Waxwing with Hepburns Finch (Leucosticte), that any one who could not set up a good Bird from such, had better conclude that Nature had not fitted him for Taxadermy & he had better resign the task.

You enquire, where is the Tobyhanna? Well, it is a beautiful limpid, broad, & rapid Trout Stream, flowing through the Pocono Mountain which lies intermediate between, the Delaware Water Gap & Wilkesbarre, on the North Branch of the Susquehannah; while there a couple of years ago. a Trout was caught. which weighed 3 lbs & have since learned from Mr Geo N. Lawrence, that his Nephew was of the party that took it. I have myself taken them 12 to 15 in long. of course the Mourning, the black T green & others build there, as it was in June; the locality was similar to the one you speak of, low growth & clearing, except along the creek, where the timber was heavy. in fact they seemed to abound every where, in this Locality; but Upton, Maine I have never visited, the Idea of obtaining Eleven Cape May W. in a morning, excites my astonishment. as I never met with but one & that was in my own garden; I have known several fine specimens. Well now, my dear friend I will not burden you just upon the eve of your departure, & I tell you plainly, that though I value your friendship, would not have the correspondence irksome to you;

West Philada Febry 8th/78

Gents

I take pleasure in Introducing to your acquaintance, the bearer, my Friend Mr Wm Brewster, a Naturalist of preeminence, Who visits Florida, on Scientific pursuits, any kind attentions, shewn him, will be regarded, as intended to myself.
We received the beautiful Florida grasses, for which please accept our thanks.
Lillie & Emma were here to dinner a few days since, the family all well

Yours &c
J. H. McIlvain
3305 Baring St

Ashmead Bros.
33 West Bay St
Jacksonville
Florida